

The Mail Car, April 2017 issue of *BLHS Bulletin*

Jim:

The Robert F. Collins photograph of D&H Challenger #1534 at the head of a 101-car WM-3 on the cover of the February 2017 *BLHS Bulletin* is a prize winner. In the late 1950s, I was a high school student in Simpson, and sights such as this were a daily occurrence there. The train is shown here as it begins its ascent of the Jefferson Branch of the Erie from Carbondale, through Simpson, to Ararat Summit and beyond.

The grade in the Carbondale yard, from South to North, was 1.31%. From West Carbondale to Forest City the grade was 1.48%. This was the steepest part of the grade on the Jefferson Branch and it was on this portion of the line that a Forest City kicker was used. From Forest City to Ararat Summit the grade was 0.88%. The northbound grade from the yard at Carbondale, PA to the top of Ararat Summit averaged a continuous 1.2 to 1.4%, but was 19 miles in length. The grade from Starrucca up to Ararat was 1.3%. The southbound grade, from the Cascade Wye, near Lanesboro, to the top of Ararat Summit was 1.3 to 1.5%, and was 17 miles long.

The 34.6-mile long Jefferson Branch of the Erie from Carbondale to Lanesboro, over which the D&H had trackage rights, opened on October 10, 1870. D&H trackage rights over the line, it should be noted, were never granted in perpetuity to the D&H by the Erie. Rather, those rights were granted for fixed periods of time.

On January 1, 1955, when the D&H purchased outright the Jefferson Branch from the Erie for \$3.5 million dollars, the lease agreement in effect between the D&H and the Erie at that time was a one hundred year lease agreement that the D&H and the Erie entered into on January 1, 1898, that lease agreement having been signed by R. M. Olyphant for the D&H and by E. B. Thomas for the Erie. Interestingly enough, after having purchased outright the Jefferson Branch in 1955 from the Erie, the D&H then granted the Erie trackage rights over the line until 2015.

Very nice, as well, to see the C. A. Brown photo of Erie 2-10-2 #4207 at Carbondale on July 5, 1947 on page 9 of the February issue. The train is shown here, heading north, on the D&H main line into Carbondale, with Duffy's Field to be seen in the background of the photograph. Following its arrival in Carbondale and its passage through the D&H yard, the train would then move onto the Jefferson Branch of the Erie, which began at the north end of the Carbondale yard and extended to Lanesboro.

To avoid any possible confusion about (1) the point of beginning of the Jefferson Branch of the Erie, (2) the lease arrangements that were entered

into over the years by the D&H and the Erie regarding the Jefferson Branch , and (3) the ownership of the Jefferson Branch of the Erie over the years, therefore, lines 3-6 of the caption on the photograph of Erie #4207 on page 9 of the February 2017 *BLHS Bulletin* should, I think, read: "Although the D&H main line from the north end of the Carbondale yard to Lanesboro was leased from the Erie beginning in 1870, the Jefferson Branch of the Erie wasn't merged into the D&H until January 1, 1955 [not "1945"], when the D&H purchased outright for \$3.5 million dollars the Jefferson Branch from the Erie."

Regarding the very nice photograph by Dick Herbert on the bottom of page 9 of the February 2017 issue of the *BLHS Bulletin* of a D&H mixed freight, it must be said that this train is not shown here as it "rumbles south through Carbondale, Pa." Rather, it is shown here, heading south, through Forest City, Pa. Just a few miles south of Forest City, this train would make its appearance (possibly still rumbling) in Carbondale.

Very nice to see two Carbondale photos in the March 2017 *BLHS Bulletin*: (1) the Mike Bischak photo of a D&H northbound freight, August 4, 1978, at WC cabin (p. 5) and (2) the Jim Odell photograph of D&H class B7 0-8-0 switcher at the Carbondale depot (p. 13).

Best,

S. Robert Powell

February 13, 2017

Re: For the April Mail Car

Robert,

Thank you very much for the comments (and more, happily) on the photos. The 1945 date was a typo; I knew it was 1955, but my fingers did not, and no one caught it. Your comments should appear in the April issue, which I won't be setting up for a couple of weeks. Traditionally, the staff gets both February and July off so various writers (including me) get a shot or two at vacation. Ironically, the paid "staff" (the printing company) gets the schedule jiggered to fit their schedule; such is the life in a not-for-profit group.

Your corrections and information are always welcome.

Jim

